

"When I was still a college student, I distinctly remembering hearing President Kennedy's call to service: 'Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.' Moved by the president's enthusiasm, I responded by joining the newly-formed Peace Corps and was promptly shipped off to language training, and then to Colombia, South America. The two years of work that followed fit the motto 'the toughest job you'll ever love' perfectly. I focused on community development in a poor barrio in Medellin, working to organize my barrio and trying to help Colombians help themselves. I believe I made a positive impact on the lives of my Colombian co-workers, neighbors and friends, and I know the experience was key to the rest of my career in public service.

"In the years since I returned from Colombia thousands of Americans have served as Peace Corps Volunteers. Each of these volunteers has made a difference, large or small, in the lives of hundreds of people across the globe. Person-to-person relationships like those built by PCVs are key to greater understanding - greater American understanding of other cultures, and greater understanding of Americans by other cultures. The sheer number of volunteers and countries where Americans have served is a testament to the inspiring and enduring nature of Peace Corps. I wish the Peace Corps a very happy 45th anniversary and look forward to seeing this deserving program continue to grow in the coming decades!"